

Implementing Contemplative Prayer in the Korean American Church

A Professional Project

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by

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faculty of Claremont School of Theology in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

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## **Abstract**

This study was done to find ways to improve and deepen the spiritual lives of the young Korean Christians attending Korean American churches. The research focuses on contemplative prayer and how it can be incorporated into the common prayer method used in Korean churches, Tongsung prayer. I implemented various contemplative prayer practices in a six-week experiment with a group of young Korean Christians and received feedback on the pros and cons of each method. Through studying the contemplative and Tongsung prayer, I was able to find an integrative method that encourages the deepening of spiritual prayer lives using both prayer practices for the young Korean Christians.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my wife, Grace, who is a gift from God.

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## **Chapter 1 — Introduction**

### **Examining the Problems of Prayer in Korean Churches**

The target issue for this D. Min. project is to research the most effective ways to apply different types of prayer in 21<sup>st</sup> century Korean Christian churches. Currently, I am serving as the young adult pastor in the Korean congregation at Bell Memorial United Methodist Church. Based upon my experiences as a pastor, I have concluded that Korean Christian churches have very limited ways of practicing prayer, in comparison with other Christian churches in the United States. My objective for this research study is to assess the different models of contemplative prayer that are applicable to Korean Christian churches today.

### **Thesis**

This research will show that contemplative prayer can have a positive impact on deepening the spiritual lives of young Korean Christians between the ages of 20 and 30 who are attending Korean American churches.

### **Scope and Limitations**

This study is not applicable to the entire Korean Christian community of churches as there are realistic limitations in practicing a new model of prayer in real life. The new types of prayer we examine are more applicable to Korean Christian churches in the United States. They specifically target the young adult population between the ages of 20 and 30 in the Korean Christian church. The research on the different prayer models primarily caters to the young generation of Korean Christians living in the United States. This age group was selected to encourage the younger generation to change the Korean Christian churches current prayer method, which is the Tongsung prayer.



The Introduction identifies the issues associated with traditional spiritual practices in Korean Christian churches today. We will explore the early justification of prayer that Korean Christian churches currently utilize, and the problems associated with these traditional spiritual practices in relation to Korean young adult Christians in the U.S.

## Methods

First, I would like to study contemplative prayer practices among the Christian church traditions from different perspectives. Through my study, I will examine various contemplative prayer practices that fit the culture, style, and age of the youth and college students who attend Korean Christian churches in the U.S. I will research the spiritual practices, prayers, and other current methods that Korean Christian churches continue to implement, examining the pros and cons of each. Then, I will research the outstanding aspects of the compassion practices and contemplative prayers. Based upon the results of this research, I intend to construct a case study that will involve practicing the different prayer models with an actual group of Korean young adult Christians. After trying out the different prayer models, the young adults will complete a survey; sharing their thoughts and feelings about what they think are the differences between the new prayer models and the traditional methods of praying. They will also be asked to identify the benefits they see in specific prayer types and to identify areas in which they see each model can be improved. The survey results will be reviewed and compiled for analysis of why it is important to incorporate contemplative prayer in the prayer life within Korean Christian churches.

## Chapter Outline

This thesis project will develop as follows:

Chapter one will introduce the project. The thesis will be stated, along with the scope and limitations, and methods I used to carry out this project. In addressing my thesis of impacting young Korean Christians, I will describe the age group and specify that it is Korean American churches on which I am centering my research. The methods portion will compare and contrast different types of prayers in Scripture and explain how I will use contemplative prayer in my project with the young adult Korean Christians.

Chapter two will give an overview of different types of contemplative prayer practices. Contemplative prayer brings the person to an intimate relationship with God through powerful meditation. As Jesus emphasized the importance of prayer and taught Christians how to pray, this practice is vital for the Christian faith. Contemplative prayer paves the way for a shift in focus of our needs and desires in regard to what God is trying to speak to the individual.

Chapter three will discuss the Korean Christian Church and the importance of contemplative prayer. The most common form of prayer within the Korean Christian Church is Tongsung prayer. In this chapter, I will evaluate Tongsung Prayer and define its status within the Korean Christian Church. My experience with Tongsung prayer is that it was helpful for the older generations of Koreans, but does not create a deeper connection for the younger Korean Christians due to their historical disconnect from the past and to different concerns relevant to the current era. Examining the pros and cons of this widely used Tongsung prayer in the Korean church can help introduce contemplative prayer in Korean churches to deepen the prayer life of the younger generation who may not understand this prayer in the way the older generation of Korean Christians relates to it.

In chapter four, the project of incorporating contemplative prayer for the Korean young adult group at Bell Memorial Korean United Methodist Church will be described. My purpose in this project of implementing contemplative prayer for the Korean young adult group is to introduce different prayers without explicitly stating the idea of contemplative prayer. My goal is to learn in depth how individuals are able to reach this state of contemplation. Through this project, I want to prove that it is important to introduce contemplative prayer to the younger generation of Korean Christians so that they can experience the deep intimacy of prayer.

Chapter five will conclude the argument for my thesis project by examining the outcomes of the project and overviewing the positive impact of contemplative prayer. Through the course of several weeks during which I introduced different types of contemplative prayer, the group had a great experience learning about prayer other than Tongsung prayer. They provided me with feedback regarding what they felt was the most beneficial to their spiritual walk and the growth in intimacy they experienced in prayer. My recommendations for the methods of spiritual practices were given in the end to help guide them to prayers that can be better suited to their generation. The outcome of my project has been a positive impact on the younger members of my church and I have confidence that it will bring many influential changes to other young Korean Christians.

## Chapter 2 — Overview of Different Contemplative Prayer Practices

### Definition of Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer is a common prayer used in the Western Christian Church. In the Christian context, it is defined as direct communion with God through a deep internal meditation to reach a powerful union between God and the individual. Various spiritual writers define contemplation differently. William Shannon says an important aspect of contemplative prayer is “awareness of the presence of God apprehended not by thought but by love. Awareness, which is central to contemplation, is a very different experience from thinking: it tends always to be unitive.”<sup>1</sup> Contemplative prayer is an intimate knowing that is experienced through the interior silence of emotions, thoughts, and spirituality that seeks to align one’s will with God’s will so that an individual can gain a deeper understanding of God’s promise to them. Generally, contemplative prayer is cultivated in the midst of exterior silence, but silence is not a necessary element in order to practice contemplative prayer. Some individuals are able to meditate internally and commune with God in a noisy environment as they create a secure space and time for themselves. However, for beginners in contemplative prayer, interior silence is easier to cultivate in times of exterior silence which facilitates the sense of quietness that should be modeled within. The motive for contemplative prayer is for individuals to “put off their false self, empirical ego, and find their true self in God” according to Shannon.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William H. Shannon, “Contemplation, Contemplative Prayer” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 209.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 209.

Similar to Shannon's definition, Burghardt describes contemplative prayer as "a long loving look at the real."<sup>3</sup> Burghardt uses the definition given by the contemplative Carmelite William McNamara to explain what it means to look at reality with love. McNamara says contemplation is a "pure intuition of being, born of love. It is experiential awareness of reality and a way of entering into immediate communion with reality."<sup>4</sup> This reality that Burghardt emphasizes is the world as it is, the truth as it is, such as "the living, pulsing people, the reality of fire and ice; reality of the sun setting, a gentle doe streaking through the forest...the reality of the risen Christ."<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Merton defines contemplative prayer as "the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life... it is an awareness of the reality of that Source."<sup>6</sup> The author uses the concept of dying to oneself from the verse in the Bible, Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>7</sup> When individuals come to a point in contemplative prayer of being aware of who God is, they put to death their life and come to experience a greater spiritual awakening. Merton emphasizes that this awareness is the "awakening to the Real within all that is real. A vivid awareness of infinite Being at the roots of our own limited being."<sup>8</sup> Through contemplative prayer, the individual comes to see the infinite being God is and one's own finite being.

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<sup>3</sup> William McNamara, Walter J. Burghardt., "Contemplation: A Long, Loving Look at the Real", *Church*, No. 5 (Winter 1989), 14-18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York, NY: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1972), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Galatians 2:20 (English Standard Version).

<sup>8</sup> Merton, *New Seeds*, 3.

Incorporating these contemplative prayer practices into the Korean Christian tradition will be crucial if we want to raise the new generation to embrace a familiar prayer life that fits their current Korean culture. Within the Christian religion, the Korean culture has developed deep roots to the Tongsung prayer which is so widely used in the church that it has left almost no room for new prayer methods that I believe will be more beneficial for the younger generation of Korean Christians. “Contemplation is the echo. It is a deep resonance in the inmost center of our spirit in which our very life loses its separate voice and re-sounds with the majesty and the mercy of the Hidden and Loving One.”<sup>9</sup> Christians in the Old and New Testament can be seen using contemplative prayers that give us an example for how it should be practiced today. The examples from the Bible and different contemplative prayers today aim their thoughts, mind, and action solely to listening to God’s answers to their prayers.

### Contemplative Prayers in the Bible

Scripture and prayer must go hand in hand. Several authors of Scripture have written their life through prayer and speak of their relationship with God. Christ Himself teaches Christians how to pray in the Lord’s Prayer, which is the base on which other methods of prayer are grounded. “The principal sourcebook of Christian meditation is the scripture, in which God reveals himself to us. We may say that meditation is not properly prayer in the sense we have defined it (a personal encounter with God in love) -- but, because love depends on knowledge, meditation on the scripture is an essential first step to genuine prayer.”<sup>10</sup> Through reading and meditating on God’s Word, Christians are able to experience the God that the authors of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas H. Green, S.J., *Opening to God* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1977), 87.

Scripture experienced. “All Scripture is breathed out by God”<sup>11</sup> and the authors were led by the Holy Spirit to write out the words. In the Old and New Testament, we are able to examine the lives of many biblical characters and Jesus Christ to study their prayers. These prayers came in many forms, but the types of methods I will examine are prayers of supplication, thanksgiving, and lamentation.

### *Prayers in the Old Testament*

In the Old Testament, many apostles and faithful descendants prayed to God such as Moses, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and David. From the many examples, I will focus on David specifically and analyze the Psalms he has written to categorize the prayers from the Old Testament.

#### Supplication

In David’s prayer of supplication, we see that he pours out specific requests to God according to his helpless circumstance. Contemplative prayer draws out the inner most personal feelings and allows individuals to seek God in a communion that is specific to their needs. Here are examples of David crying out to God in hope to be delivered from his trial.

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!<sup>12</sup>

Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name! The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16 (English Standard Version).

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 4:1 (English Standard Version).

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 142:6-7 (English Standard Version).

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!<sup>14</sup>

Examining the prayer of supplication seen in the Old Testament, we always see a return of praise toward God. God's faithfulness, mercy, righteousness, omnipotence, and justice are all qualities that are highlighted in the Psalms.

David would not be praying these things to God out of faith if he didn't himself believe that God was going to fulfill these prayers according to His will. God reveals through the Old Testament prayers that He answers prayers of those who genuinely pray. When David states "you have given me relief when I was in distress"<sup>15</sup>, he is stating that God has followed through with his prayers before. The prayers David prays to ask God to make him more like Him shows that he is asking for God to renew his heart, mind, and soul to become pure. David places himself in a humble position and echoes the characteristic qualities of God that will reveal grace and mercy to the sinner. God answers prayers according to His will for people, but that doesn't mean He will disregard the specific longings of His children.

## Thanksgiving

Another common pattern of prayer we see in the Old Testament is the prayer of thanksgiving. In the Psalms, David's prayers are an example of thanksgiving unto God in the midst of his trials and praise when God delivers him from the hands of Saul. During every circumstance, we see David lifting thanksgiving to God for being faithful, unchanging, holy, and

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<sup>14</sup> Psalm 51:1-2 (English Standard Version).

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 4:1 (English Standard Version).



just. Through his prayers of thanksgiving, we see God delivering David from the brink of death and giving him joy in the midst of suffering.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy...<sup>16</sup>

This is a typical form of the prayers that David lifted up to God in different passages throughout the Psalms to highlight God's character and to identify specific details of how God dealt personally with him. In this thanksgiving prayer David is acknowledging God's response and is marveling at God's grace and mercy.

## Lamentation

When we examine the Old Testament we see many examples of David lamenting before God in deep agony. A common trend we see among Christians and non-Christians today is that we look for God when we are most helpless, but when we assume that we are in control of our lives, we forget about God. Here are examples of David's lament before God:

O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them...Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.<sup>17</sup>

O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation from him in God." But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Psalm 103:1-4 (English Standard Version).

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 86:14, 16-17 (English Standard Version).

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 3:1-3 (English Standard Version).

## *Prayers in the New Testament*

The most widely known prayer in the New Testament is the Lord's Prayer. Jesus Himself teaches his disciples how to pray in the Scripture books of Matthew and Luke. Through the Lord's Prayer, we can see that Jesus emphasizes an individual's communion with God through specific ways of exalting God rather than displaying an external holiness in front of people. Jesus says, pray then like this:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.<sup>19</sup>

This prayer is the example Jesus Himself gave to Christians to show how to pray to God. The start of prayer is to lift up words of adoration unto God, repentance before Him, faith for deliverance from the temptations of this world, and hope for the heavenly Kingdom to come. This relationship is between the individual and God personally as they structure their prayer according to Jesus' prayer.

### Supplication

The prayer of supplication in the New Testament has specific guidelines that are used to encourage Christians to pray. This outline comes from the assurance of salvation, the work of Jesus Christ in their lives, and the continuous faithfulness of God from the Old Testament to the present state. Matthew writes,

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew 6:9-13 (English Standard Version).

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.<sup>20</sup>

The Christians in the New Testament see the character of God as one who is true, faithful, and unchanging and learn to deepen their prayer life by remembering His qualities. Paul teaches the church in Philippi to give thanks in the midst of trials and to pray in this way, encouraging them with the hope they have in Christ.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.<sup>21</sup>

### Thanksgiving

In Paul's writings to the churches in the New Testament, he always writes a prayer of thanksgiving when he begins his letter. This Apostle always gives thanks to God in all circumstances, whether it's in his prison cell, hearing the troubles of the church, and in his encouragement. This emphasizes how Paul recognized the importance of placing thanksgiving at the heart of worship for Christians as he writes to encourage and admonish them. Paul wrote, "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened."<sup>22</sup> This chapter emphasizes the wrath of God on the unrighteous. Paul highlights that the start of all ungodliness and unrighteousness in men is that they did not give thanks to God, therefore God darkened their

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew 7:7-8 (English Standard Version).

<sup>21</sup> Philippians 4:6 (English Standard Version).

<sup>22</sup> Romans 1:21 (English Standard Version).

foolish hearts. In the New Testament, similar to the Old Testament, we see faithful Christians honoring God first and foremost before revealing their heart's desires and pains.

The difference in the New Testament is that there are many prayers that give thanks for Christ's victory on the cross for their sins. "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>23</sup> Paul's representative thanksgiving prayer is written in Colossians 1 which begins by Paul saying to the church at Colossae,

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven...<sup>24</sup>

In this text, we see that Paul encourages the people to give thanks to God for Christ's saving them on the cross and redeeming His people to the glory that is to be revealed. Continuously throughout the New Testament, Paul thanks God for fellow believers who have entered into communion with God, the church that is being persecuted, and the character of God. The example Christians today can follow is to remember to "give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."<sup>25</sup>

## Lamentation

In the New Testament, Paul the Apostle was the one who was persecuted for the sake of Christ. After Paul's conversion, he came to be known as one of the most influential characters in

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:56-57 (English Standard Version).

<sup>24</sup> Colossians 1:3-5a (English Standard Version).

<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 5:20 (English Standard Version).

the New Testament, proclaiming the Gospel. This caused a lot of controversy among the cities of Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome. From his prayers, we see Paul's lamentation unto God.

I am speaking the truth in Christ -- I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit -- that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.<sup>26</sup>

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.<sup>27</sup>

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.<sup>28</sup>

These prayers reveal a desperate plea before God that comes from sorrow and pain. This type of prayer is seen throughout Scripture as it illustrates the relationship between Creator and creation. The creation, human beings, are weak compared to the Creator who is defined as the God of the Universe who is holy, omnipotent, sovereign, and omniscient.

Examples of supplication, thanksgiving, and lamenting from the Bible reemphasize the key points of prayer that are important to enhance contemplative prayer. There are structures of prayers from characters both in the Old and New Testaments that Christians in the Korean Church can incorporate into their prayer life. Prayer is an important part of a Christian's spiritual walk with God, but if it is not centered on biblical contexts, it is meaningless and easy to be focused on personal gain rather than God's glory.

## Different Contemplative Prayer Practices

### *Dialogue with Scripture*

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<sup>26</sup> Romans 9:1-2 (English Standard Version).

<sup>27</sup> Romans 7:15 (English Standard Version).

<sup>28</sup> Romans 7:19-20 (English Standard Version).

One example of contemplative prayer is a method that consists of dialoguing with Scripture. Teresa A. Blythe writes that the purpose of this method is for individuals to deepen their understanding by learning to place themselves in the shoes of biblical characters. She states that, “Scripture doesn’t have to be a one-way communication. It invites us to respond, question, debate, and celebrate its offering. When we begin to ‘talk back’ to Scripture, it comes alive and becomes interactive. Our critical thinking skills engage with our spiritual ‘feelers,’ strengthening our faith.”<sup>29</sup> Any Bible passage is available for this type of prayer, it is a method merely used to understand Scripture on a more realistic level. Once you choose the selected Scripture, you read it several times to consider what its underlying message is and consider different perspectives using the characters. Through dialogue, an individual is able to gain insight into what the characters may have been thinking, questions they had regarding the situation, and meditating on what Scripture is trying to convey. After this deep meditation, the individual is encouraged to write down what was experienced so that the insight will be helpful for them to review in the future.

Through these Scripture dialogues, individuals are able to place themselves in the shoes of Bible characters with other Christians and are able to feel and understand what God is trying to say through the message. From the dialogues, individuals are able to discuss and meditate on what was read, spoken, and heard from the Bible, applying it to their daily lives. This form of prayer can be expanded and deepened for Christians if they study the historical context of that time period and geography, understanding Scripture’s background.

### *Create Your Own Psalms*

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<sup>29</sup> Teresa A. Blythe, *50 ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006) Kindle ed., 17.

The Psalms are among the most expressive passages in all of Scripture. The emotions that are drawn out in the text range from sorrow, joy, anger, frustration, to peace. Teresa Blythe points the Christian to the hope that they give by ensuring that no matter what emotion is felt, the believer can have confidence, knowing that it can be brought up to God. In this project of creating your own psalm, there is no set way of writing. It does not have to be a poem or an elaborate passage that is similar to the Psalms, but an honest revelation of one's emotions. Luckily there are references to examine that offer a variety of emotions that have been spilled out in the Psalms by previous psalmists. Another option that is available besides writing a brand new psalm is to rewrite one of the Psalms in your own words. The purpose of this is to place ourselves in the psalmist's shoes and practice expressing our innermost thoughts to God.

### *Creating Your Psalm Exercise Direction*

1. Choose a comfortable area in which to write your psalm. Gather writing materials and a Bible.
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you to draw out your emotions and to help you write.
3. Discover what you would like to share with God. What is your deepest longings? What are your honest feelings? Search the Scriptures based on the type of emotion you are experiencing. Below is an example of topics and references in the Bible to choose from.

Joy – Psalms 11, 18, 23, 27, 33, 84, 87, 103, 112, 122, 150

Peace – Psalms 23, 63, 103

Love – Psalms 33, 62, 99, 103, 104, 139, 145

Gratitude – Psalms 30, 32, 65, 75, 77, 103, 118, 136

Fear – Psalms 86, 130, 131

Anger or rage – Psalms 55, 58, 94

Persecution – Psalms 17, 26, 35, 69, 141

Distress – Psalms 29, 42, 44, 71, 88, 109, 113

Need for healing – Psalms 22, 38, 41

Need for guidance – Psalms 25, 37, 72

Need for justice – Psalms 26, 52, 114

Need for forgiveness – Psalms 39, 51<sup>30</sup>

4. Write a free-form psalm based on your feeling or longing. If you prefer, choose a Psalm that expresses some of what you are feeling and rewrite it in your own words. Be as honest with God as the psalmists are.
5. Read your psalm aloud to yourself, pray through what you've written, and offer your psalm unto God.

Learn to keep a record of the psalms you've written and meditate on what you've felt and how God molded you from that emotion. The Psalms in Scripture are poems that express the conversation David had with God to confess his trust in Him in all circumstances. David used poems to express thanksgiving, praise, and adoration to God. This type of contemplative prayer helps to keep a record of your prayers in writing and can be meditated on by reflecting on it in the future. The emotions written in personal psalms are to acknowledge weaknesses before God since those who think they can stand on their own will not feel the need to pour out their emotions to another being. Realizing one's lowliness makes it possible to hope in a greater being, in God. The greatest weakness of Christians is the sin that hinders them from coming to

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<sup>30</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 29.



God to worship in a pure state. They must rely on the Holy Spirit that is in them to constantly be convicted of sin and to repent before God to make them more like Christ.

### *“Here I Am” Prayer*

Adapted from Anthony Bloom’s classic *Beginning To Pray*, this contemplative prayer type is easy to follow since it starts with the basics of prayer. Anthony Bloom was a Russian Orthodox archbishop who wrote *Beginning To Pray* in 1970. The book presented the simplest and shortest way to pray. The highlight of this book is the chapter called “Managing Time,” where it emphasizes the basics of this type of prayer and the benefits of it.<sup>31</sup> The main reason for this prayer is to be present in prayer for a duration of five minutes. In this prayer, the individual repeats, “Here I am seated, doing nothing. I will do nothing for five minutes.” The individual then focuses on the experience of the physical sense of the body, where it’s at, how it feels in the environment, and how it is relaxed. Through this prayer, the individual then senses the surroundings and just being there, stating “Here I am in the presence of the room.” This is followed with repeatedly saying to oneself, “Here I am in the presence of God.” Voicing this awareness places one in the presence of God, and one is able to meditate on the presence of God in that moment.

### *Deep Listening Prayer*

Teresa Blythe says that “the heart of Christian spiritual contemplation is listening -- to the still, small voice of God, to our inner wisdom, and to others.”<sup>32</sup> The purpose of this prayer is to recognize the heart behind one’s memory of God working in one’s life and to bless others by

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<sup>31</sup> Anthony Bloom, *Beginning To Pray* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1970), 79.

<sup>32</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 34.

praying for them during this time. Two or more people come together and take turns sharing a specific topic chosen while others stay silent and completely tune their ears to listen only. This type of listening is not easy and most people tend to be distracted through their own thoughts and opinions while others share. Following the format of this prayer may seem difficult at first, but it was created with experience and the participants in mind. The motive for this practice is spiritual growth through listening to others, praying for someone else, and to incorporate deep listening into daily life. Learning to pray through many customized forms when life is busy can transform one's once dull prayer life to a daily practice of intentional listening.

### *The Jesus Prayer*

The Jesus prayer is the most famous prayer in the history of Christianity due to the Scripture references that portray it. In the Gospel of Luke, we see the Jesus prayer in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector.<sup>33</sup>

But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.<sup>34</sup>

This short phrase of “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” was later expanded by Christians to “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”<sup>35</sup> The Gospel of Mark shows an example of the blind Bartimaeus who cries to Jesus saying, “Son of David, have mercy on me.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>34</sup> Luke 18:13-14 (English Standard Version).

<sup>35</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 38.

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”<sup>37</sup>

The history of the Jesus Prayer comes from Orthodox Christians in the Middle Ages who believed that saying the name of Jesus would provide power and grace that led to an inner silence called *hesychia*. This prayer became popular because it led the people to a deep inner contemplation and centering prayer. This prayer is labeled “Prayer of the heart” because it takes place silently and leads individuals to a deeper relationship with God. Reverend Daniel Wolpert mentions in *Creating a Life with God*, “The exact wording, so long as it contains the name of Jesus, is irrelevant.”<sup>38</sup>

### *The Prayer of Breath*

Breath itself is a type of prayer as the Hebrew word for Holy Spirit *ruach* means ‘breath’, ‘spirit’, or ‘wind’. In Genesis 2:7 “then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature”.<sup>39</sup> The Scriptures say that God breathed into the nostrils of man, giving life. This passive motor skill that we take for granted is what God Himself breathed into man and one which humans cannot live without. The almost mindlessness of breathing is part of the creation of man. This passive action is easy since it takes no effort, but prayer does not come as easily. God created man to worship Him and that is seen in the fact that our body was created naturally to breathe out what God poured into us in creation. The body is itself acknowledging that God gave life to His

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 38; Mark 10:47 (English Standard Version).

<sup>38</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 39.

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 2:7 (English Standard Version).

people through His breath. The action of inhaling and exhaling refreshes the mind and reminds the body who the Creator is.

This breath prayer is significant in that the Spirit of God is present as individuals breathe in and out. When we examine John 20:22, we see that Christ breathed on his disciples. “And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit...’”<sup>40</sup> This is essentially an effortless prayer as we are simply observing and following our own breathing that is gifted to us by the Creator of this Universe.

Overall, this prayer begins with our breath, since our breath is prayer in itself. When people realize that their very being was created to worship a Creator, they will understand that they are a precious creation made in the image of God. This self-awareness reflects contemplative prayer within love. Additionally, the contemplative prayer reaches out to others to reconcile, reconnect, and restore relationships in spite of the conflicts, difficulties, and sufferings they may have or will face.

### *Centering Prayer*<sup>41</sup>

In the Christian faith, there are two types of prayers that we can distinguish which are Kataphatic prayer and Apophatic prayer. About Kataphatic prayer, Bourgeault explains “It is a wonderful tool to make our way in this world and to experience it richly from the perspective of being a unique person with unique gifts to share and a unique relationship to God.”<sup>42</sup> The Kataphatic prayer primarily focuses on ‘egoic selfhood’ and relates worship, prayer, and

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<sup>40</sup> John 20:22 (English Standard Version).

<sup>41</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 32.

<sup>42</sup> Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications, 2004), 31.

meditation to one's own life.<sup>43</sup> Centering prayer is the example of Apophatic prayer, which corresponds more to 'spiritual awareness', not only the 'spiritual sense'.

It is important to understand the way of Apophatic prayer correctly. Bourgeault mentioned this problem, "Most of the confusion and equivocation that can creep into the teaching of Centering Prayer, I've found, comes from trying to mix the streams—or in other words, from approaching Apophatic prayer with a Kataphatic mindset."<sup>44</sup> Centering prayer done silently doesn't mean that we always manage to get the new insight, or direction right away. Bourgeault explained that "Silence is not a backdrop for form, and diffuse, open awareness is not an empty chalice waiting to be filled with specific insight and directives. It is its own kind of perceptivity, its own kind of communion." Also, Bourgeault quoted a hint by Father Tom Francis, in his definition of Apophatic as "Prayer beyond the faculties" – "...Jesus does his work without the meditator calling upon Him or talking to Him. Let Jesus do his thing and the pray-er do his, that is, total receptivity."<sup>45</sup> In the centering prayer, we need to fully get into the silence rather than using the silence as the way to find the insight or direction.

If we want to practice the Centering prayer more faithfully and consistently, Bourgeault recommends, "letting go of thoughts as we notice them, not worrying too much and not getting too tangled up in self-reflection, what we are actually patterning into ourselves is a very important piece of spiritual learning: that access to the apophatic realm is somehow related to this act of letting go –or surrender, to give it its true spiritual name."<sup>46</sup> The contemporary Trappist monk, Father Tom Francis depicts the heart of apophatic prayer:

Centering Prayer insists that the one who prays wishes to meet God as God is, directly,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 41.

immediately -- i.e., not mediated by any thought, prayer, reflection, or reading. And so the eyes are closed, the pray-er shuts down completely all the operations of normal consciousness, not allowing any idea, thought, or image. Thus the normal faculties of intellect, imagination, memory, and will are closed down, inoperative, and the person goes to his center, his spirit, his deep and true Self, his personhood, where he is made to the image of God, spirit to Spirit, in a wordless union, communion, the lover with the Beloved (God Triune) beyond all mediations.<sup>47</sup>

Examining the history of Korean Christian churches, they are categorized under the Kataphatic prayer. Kataphatic and Apophatic prayer give different insights into the people who pray. People cannot help but be self-focused in their whole being due to the sinful nature of man. This is the reason that Kataphatic prayer is filled with drawing out personal emotions, memories, thoughts, into the realm of prayer and worship. The Korean Christian Church is accustomed to praying the Tongsung prayer that focuses on the pain, sorrows, and agony of one's life and pouring that onto God. With this mindset, it is more likely that we will be made more self-aware in prayer than that we will be able to practice Apophatic prayer as Thomas Merton describes it:

This act of total surrender is not merely a fantastic intellectual and mystical gamble; it is something much more serious. It is an act of love for this unseen person, who, in the very gift of love by which we surrender ourselves to his reality also makes his presence known to us.<sup>48</sup>

No one "invented" centering prayer, but in our time, Father Thomas Keating, a Cistercian priest and founder of the centering prayer movement, has certainly popularized it. Keating points to the many mystics and holy people throughout the ages who referred to a kind of prayer in which "deep calls to deep" without words or imagery.<sup>49</sup> Teresa of Avila (sixteenth century)

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>49</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 32.

called it “the Prayer of Quiet.”<sup>50</sup> Keating writes, “silence is God’s first language; everything else is a poor translation.”<sup>51</sup>

As you recognize how centering prayer is entered, you may notice that it looks a lot like mantra meditation or what some might call secular meditation. What makes it different is that centering prayer has as its sole intention to be in the presence of the living Creator. It is the relationship between the Creator and creation that makes centering prayer unique since it filters out any form of distraction in that concept.

Centering prayer may come to some as challenging, especially for those in Korean Christian churches who are accustomed to praying out loud, for whom silent meditation is “not really praying.” There is comfort in that God hears all prayers and knows people’s hearts before they see it themselves. Keating points out in *Invitation To Love*, that many of the benefits of centering prayer are experienced at points after the practice when God reveals Himself through answers and revelations.<sup>52</sup> It is important for those starting centering prayer to understand what it is and to approach it with an open mind. The difficult task in dealing with the Korean Christian Church is that the concept of contemplative prayer is not popular and it is also foreign. Many Christians who discover this style of prayer find a freedom in their spiritual lives that they did not realize until they came to have a stronger fellowship with God.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 32.

## *Compassion Practices*

Compassion is defined as a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.<sup>53</sup> True compassion is difficult to achieve because it entails a deep emotional feeling of sympathy and sorrow that causes one to think, feel, and act upon those emotions toward another individual. Frank Rogers states, “Compassion is simply being moved in our depths by another’s experience and responding in ways that intend either to ease the suffering or to promote the flourishing within that person.”<sup>54</sup> The need for this type of prayer is necessary in a world where we are so busy and self-absorbed with meeting our own agenda and finding our own comfort. The common ground of compassion, once lost, disconnects the individual from the basic nature of a human being and leads to apathy, neglect, and pain. Compassion Practice is used to reconnect our humanness with our spirituality by “resuscitating and sustaining our capacities for care and connection.”<sup>55</sup> Here are the foundational steps Frank Rogers identifies as essential to the Compassion Practice.

1. Catch your breath (Get grounded). Get emotional and physical distance to get rid of angry, upset, or sad emotions that can cause you to react in a distorted mindset.
2. Take your PULSE (Cultivate compassion for yourself). Take a U-Turn and connect empathically with the cry of your soul hidden within your emotions and impulses.
3. Take the other’s PULSE (Cultivate compassion for another). Turn toward the other and connect empathically with the cry of the soul hidden within his or her emotions and behaviors.
4. Decide what to do (Discern compassionate action). Now grounded in compassion—both for you and the other—discern those actions that heal the suffering and nurture the flourishing of all parties involved and do them.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Compassion, Dictionary.com (Random House, Inc.), accessed March 9, 2018, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/compassion>

<sup>54</sup> Frank Rogers Jr., *Practicing Compassion* (Nashville, TN: Fresh Air Books, 2015), 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.



This will help you become centered and reconnected with the source of vitality. In doing so, you are able to reach the core of who you are and think in a sober minded way. This provides opportunities to address what is within before focusing on the outward actions. It provides for time to heal and dig deeper into the heart issue of your emotions. Once the inward healing is done, you are able to reach out to others and create opportunities for others to reflect inwardly as well.

There are six dimensions of cultivating compassion defined by Rogers called ‘PULSE’ that aids the individual in step two and three of the foundational steps for Compassion Practice.

*P-Paying attention.* Cultivate a nonjudgmental, nonreactive awareness of what the person is doing and how he or she is doing it.

*U-Understanding empathically.* Listen for and be moved by the suffering hidden within the cry of his or her emotions or behavior -- the fear, longing, or aching wound in need of care.

*L-Loving with connection.* As the suffering within the other person moves you, extend care toward the need or wound that surfaces.

*S-Sensing the sacredness.* Recognize and savor the cosmic expanse of compassion that holds and heals every wound within him or her.

*E-Embodying new life.* Notice the gifts and qualities of restored humanity that are being birthed within the person and yearn for his or her flourishing.<sup>57</sup>

There are many types of compassion practices in the world. However, these basic steps are needed for the practitioners to delve deeper into compassion practices. These basic concepts are very important particularly when people feel disconnected from the center of compassion. It is always important to follow the steps in Frank’s words: “Catch your breath. Take your PULSE. Take the other’s PULSE. Then and only then, decide what to do and do it.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 33.

In compassion practice, I try to focus on cultivating compassion for the others. In the book *Practicing Compassion*, Frank mentions ‘Loving our enemies,’<sup>59</sup> and ‘taking the other’s PULSE’. For me, this echoes what I learned from Jesus, to ‘Love your enemies’.<sup>60</sup> Jesus is the one who has demonstrated His compassionate heart for all people. He came to this world as a sacrifice for God’s children through God’s compassion for His world. It is very hard to emulate his way of compassion as a human. However, we can practice compassion like Jesus using the contemplative and compassion practices.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>60</sup> Matthew 5:44 (English Standard Version), “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

### **Chapter 3 — Korean Christian Churches and Contemplative Prayer**

Through my ministry, especially with young adults, I receive various questions regarding what prayer is. They ask questions such as how to pray, what time of day to pray, and what to pray. They know who to pray to, but they do not understand where to begin in their relationship with God. This concept of communicating to God seems different than talking to your close friend, family, or co-worker. As their pastor, I have wrestled with how to explain to these young adults what prayer is and how to teach them to pray.

When I ponder these questions about prayer, there is always a thought that comes to mind. Prayer is not a one-way communication, but it is a conversation between you and God. There is always a definite answer to a prayer whether it comes to the individual as an answered prayer, unanswered prayer, or as a time of waiting from the Lord. The problem is that Christians tend to make their requests to God but they fail to make the effort to listen to God's response.

In the aftermath of prayers of supplication to God, it is necessary to have a time during which you seek to understand God's answers. Marking your prayer as a checklist by completing it and then forgetting about it is like telling God that I've done my duty and that's the end. That approach is not glorifying to God. Not just prayers of supplication, but listening prayer, breathing prayer, prayer with nature, meditational prayer, and walking prayer are several ways that I've come to see the Holy Spirit work in my life. There is no right or best way to pray. However, the key to any type of prayer is understanding that it is an intimate communication with God. In these prayers, individuals reflect on themselves, understand themselves, and receive answers.

## Early Morning Prayer

A tradition in the Korean Christian Church is called ‘Early Morning Prayer’ which was started around 1907, by Elder Kil Sun Ju at Jangdaehyun Church in Pyongyang. Beginning as a small group, the practice quickly grew to about four hundred people praying together in the early morning. Eventually, it became widespread enough to impact the revival movements at Pyongyang. For many years Early Morning Prayer has been a tradition in most Korean Christian churches around the globe.

Typically, the prayer service begins every day between 5:30 and 6:00 a.m. It represents a spiritual awakening each morning as a tribute to God. Early Morning Prayer is a time to be very calm and to concentrate on God. During the prayer people talk to God, but also they listen for God’s message for the day, or for their life. People seek God’s presence during the prayer. I believe that prayer time affects Korean Christians deeply and strengthens their faith. While it may seem different from compassion practice, the early Morning Prayer does entail self-reflection that requires regular practice.

The Early Morning Prayer starts with calling on God to be present in the prayer space. Then, the congregation sings a praise hymn or gospel song together. Afterwards, a short message is shared and led by the Pastor or Preacher for about 10-20 minutes. When the message is finished, the congregation prays together either aloud or quietly. Finally, congregants pray silently on their own, concluding the time of prayer.

Early Morning Prayer is based on people’s love for God and God’s compassion for His people. People seek God’s presence during prayer time, they seek God’s word regarding what they want or need. It is a spiritual practice within the Korean Christian tradition. There is no specific structure or guidance for the early Morning Prayer. However, I believe those who attend

the prayer learn how prayer can become deeply entrenched in their lives. When I discussed the Early Morning Prayer with my father, he said it is not only a prayer, but also it can become part of your daily ritual. He began early Morning Prayer when he was thirty years old. He has prayed the Early Morning Prayer around 5:30 a.m. for the past twenty years. He explained that the prayer helps to lead him to God's presence and communication with God.

The basic structure and methods of prayer must be established for the beginner. This includes new Christians who do not know how to pray or what to say to get into God's presence during the time of prayer. Many Christians find that Scripture is able to set the example of God's guidance through their prayers and Scripture has been used to aid in many different prayer formats.

### Tongsung Prayer

The main model of prayer used today in Korean Christian churches is quite different from contemplative prayer. It is called Tongsung Prayer. Due to the commonality of this Tongsung Prayer, it is also known as the Korean Prayer. Tongsung Prayer is actually a deep agonizing cry made to God by an individual. To understand why and how this type of prayer came to be, we need to understand the historical background of the Korean culture and the concept of 'han'.

From the early ages in Korea, 'Han' describes a certain type of emotion. 'Han' is portrayed as an ethical emotional outcry of the people and is deeply embedded in the Korean people's sadness, trials, and painful emotions. Letting out this heartfelt cry and expressing it in prayer is the method that is known as Tongsung Prayer. When we observe why Koreans needed to express this deep sorrow, it is seen in their tough socio-historical past filled with Japanese colonization (1909-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and the institutionalized oppression

caused by the military dictatorship(1961-1992).<sup>61</sup> This type of prayer has allowed Korean Christians to release emotions that are the result of years of being terrorized by war and the cruel Japanese colonization, terrors that still affect the country emotionally today. Those emotions have been identified as a deep shared national sadness and given the name “Han.” During their time of suffering, Korean Christians used Tongsung prayer and

prayed to God with their pains, sufferings, and broken hearts. They couldn’t pray silently and quietly. Rather, their pains, tears, and bitterness mixed with Han made them cry out to God loudly: “Lord, please come to us! Listen to your children’s outcry.” Through this unique form of prayer, Korean Christians have poured out their pains, bitterness, and wounded hearts before the Lord and asked God to listen to their prayers.<sup>62</sup>

Compared to Pastor Yohang Chun who highlights the history of emotional bitterness that Tongsung Prayer portrays in the Korean church, Pastor Young Bong Kim argues that Tongsung Prayer weakens intimacy with God instead of helping people to deepen their personal relationship with God. Pastor Young Bong Kim uses Hagar and Ishmael’s story as an example of crying out to God from great suffering when they were sent out into the wilderness by Sarai.<sup>63</sup> In Genesis 21:17 it says “And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.’”<sup>64</sup> The passage that states that God “heard the voice of the boy” is the most typical form of Tongsung prayer that we observe. In most Korean churches, the Tongsung prayer starts off by crying out in a loud voice ‘Lord’ three times before starting to pray. Pastor Kim criticizes that aspect of Tongsung prayer because he states that in a form of individual communication with God, it does not seem fitting to have to force people to say ‘Lord’ before

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<sup>61</sup> Yohang Chun, *Tongsung Kido: A Unique Korean Prayer*, The Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church, May 10, 2017, Accessed March 1, 2018. <http://www.unyumc.org/news/article/tongsung-kido-a-unique-korean-prayer>.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Young Bong Kim, *Sagyumeui Kido: Prayer as Fellowship with God* (Seoul: Hankookkidokkyo Student Books, 2002), 246.

<sup>64</sup> Genesis 21:17 (English Standard Version).

praying. Pastor Kim's opinion is that there should be no artificial forcing of words in our communication with God. Prayer is supposed to build a truthful intimate relationship. Most Korean churches practice crying out prayers like Tongsung prayer as if they are a broken record. As though at the sound of the shotgun, the people cry out 'Lord' three times loudly. Then the prayer begins and consists of praying loudly with words that are spoken too fast to understand.

The Lord stated in Matthew 6:6-7 as He was teaching the Lord's prayer, "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."<sup>65</sup> When an individual comes before God, repeating many biblical words, using elaborate sentences, and reciting a long prayer does not result in praying well or praying with worth. In Matthew 6:8, it states "...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."<sup>66</sup> The importance of prayer is not projecting words like a shotgun and praying until your voice is gone, but prayer refers to the interior depth with which we speak to God and the intimate union we build through it. If Korean churches continue the custom of pouring out their prayers without having a heartfelt depth to their prayers, they will be the same as Gentiles who, Matthew says, recite many words that have no meaning. External shallow habits will make it impossible to reach the inner layer of their spiritual honesty before God in their prayers. The limitation I have observed in Korean churches is that members are unable to reach the next level of depth in their communication with God because the words remain on the surface. The Korean church desperately needs to incorporate a deeper prayer practice in its prayer life in order to aid Christians to achieve a more intimate union with God.

God works through all things for His good, and He uses Tongsung prayer for His glory as well. There are benefits American Christian churches can gain from studying the Tongsung

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<sup>65</sup> Matthew 6:6-7 (English Standard Version)

<sup>66</sup> Matthew 6:8 (English Standard Version)

prayer. When Korean Christians confess their grief and make their petitions known to God, they see the Holy Spirit working in their lives. However, Tongsung prayer has its limitation because it is entirely a petitioned-based prayer.

When we examine the western Christian culture, we are able to find prayer practices that focus more on developing an inner relationship with God rather than addressing God exclusively with external cries of pain and grief. Meditative prayer and contemplative practices are just a few examples that are used in the American churches today. Korean Christian churches need a type of meditative, contemplative, and relational prayer that fits its tradition and emotional culture.



## **Chapter 4 — Contemplative Prayer Exercise in the Bell Memorial Korean United Methodist Church**

### **Analysis of Participants**

The Korean young adult ministry I'm serving in currently consists of individuals from different backgrounds. There are people who have only recently started coming out to church and those who are struggling with the assurance of salvation. Out of the 10 individuals, 6 are international students who attended school in Korea up until high school, and 4 individuals were born and raised in the United States. Many of the young adults who have never attended church have many questions regarding what prayer is, how to pray, and what the Christian faith means. After observing the method of Tongsung prayer, those individuals in my ministry have felt a slight burden about praying with the congregation.

### **Description of the Implementation Project**

I created a 6-week program introducing different types of contemplative prayers to these Korean young adults at Bell Memorial United Methodist Church. Each session lasted 30-to-45 minutes with a total of 10 students participating regularly. Week 1 consisted of an introduction to contemplative prayer with a pre-program questionnaire asking questions that would provide more insight into their knowledge of prayer and how they practice prayer currently. Week 2 was a session on centering prayer that helped practice the transition of external and internal noises to silent meditation on God. In Week 3, I introduced Deep Listening prayer where designated listeners learned to pray while solely listening to the designated speaker share a personal story. The topic for Week 4 was Jesus Prayer where individuals chose a variation of the Jesus prayer

statements and went off individually to repeat the prayer, reflecting on the hymn and Scripture that had been presented earlier. Week 5 was a session on Compassion Practice that gave time for young adults to reflect on their deep sorrow and unresolved pains and to be able to sense their inner self through breathing, thinking, and reflecting. The final week of this program was dedicated to debriefing as participants shared what they had learned, what prayers they preferred, and how they could incorporate this into Korean church practices.

From the list of contemplative prayers, I've studied, I chose several styles that I thought would be most beneficial if they were introduced to the young adults of the Korean Christian churches. Our weekly young adult Bible study at Bell Memorial United Methodist Church takes place on Friday evenings and includes prayer and fellowship. During the process of reviewing this project, I decided to implement the prayers that I've studied and to introduce them to the young adults during Bible study. I chose these contemplative prayers because I knew the styles would blend well with the Korean culture and language and thus they would be most beneficial for Korean Christians.

### Design of the Project

In the past, most of the students have experienced only Tongsung prayer and have not been exposed to any other prayer style. I introduced several different prayer styles to the Korean young adults. Before the start of the implementation project, I gave them a simple questionnaire that asked questions regarding their prayer styles and the times they pray in order to gain a better understanding of their prayer life. After each session, we had a discussion about the specific prayer method that was practiced that week and I took field notes to compare the responses from the young adults over the course of the six weeks. I encouraged them that through learning

different methods of prayer, they would be able to customize their prayer life to form a closer relationship with God.

*Week 1: Introduction to contemplative prayer*

Welcome: (5 minutes) I opened up the first session by saying a prayer of thanksgiving for this opportunity and asked God to help us learn more about Him through our time together.

Description of the session's practice: (15 minutes) During this portions, I gave an orientation of the 6-week program on contemplative prayer and asked for the consent of the Korean young adults at Bell Memorial United Methodist Church. I introduced contemplative prayer to the students and explained the different types of contemplative prayers. I received consent in discussing their personal feelings on the prayers, described the layout of the next five weeks, and asked for their honest criticism for each session.

Pre-program Questionnaire: (20 minutes) A hard copy of the questionnaire was handed out to the 10 individuals who consented to the program.

The feedback I received from the pre-program questionnaire from the 10 individuals:

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
  - a. 8 individuals stated "yes"
  - b. 1 individual stated "no"
  - c. 1 individual stated "not sure yet"

2. Do you usually attend Friday night prayer and fellowship?
  - a. 6 individuals stated “mostly”
  - b. 3 individuals stated “always”
  - c. 1 individual stated “rarely”
3. Are you satisfied with your current prayer life?
  - a. 4 individuals stated “yes”
  - b. 5 individuals stated “no”
  - c. 1 individual stated “do not pray”
4. When do you pray?
  - a. 6 individuals stated “before meals/prays at church”
  - b. 2 individuals stated “during devotionals”
  - c. 2 individuals stated “does not pray unless someone else does”
5. What is your preferred style of prayer?
  - a. 5 individuals stated “Tongsung prayer”
  - b. 5 individuals stated “does not know”
6. Do you feel comfortable using Tongsung Prayer at church?

- a. 6 individuals stated “no”
  - b. 4 individuals stated “yes”
7. If not, what about it makes you feel uncomfortable?
- a. 1 individual said “not sure, but it’s not the most comfortable”.
  - b. 2 individuals said “I don’t like praying out loud”.
  - c. 1 individual said “It’s distracting hearing others saying their prayers out loud”.
8. Do you know what contemplative prayer is?
- a. 10 individuals stated “no”
9. Do you want to learn and practice the contemplative prayer?
- a. 10 individuals stated “yes”
10. If yes, do you think that using contemplative prayer along with Tongsung prayer will bring about positive change to your prayer life?
- a. 10 individuals stated “yes”
11. Will having a variety of methods of prayer bring about a positive change to your faith?
- a. 10 individuals stated “yes”

Discussion of the practice: (10 minutes) This time was used to discuss the questionnaire that was filled out to debrief and share how the young adults are understanding prayer. This time was important to be able to see how much we learned at the end of the 6-week program.

Conclusion: (10 minutes) The first session concluded in prayer.

### *Week 2: Centering prayer*

Welcome: (5 minutes) I began week 2 with a prayer for God to lead this time of Centering prayer.

Scripture Verse for the session: (10 minutes) I read Mark 1:35-39 to open up the session.

Mark 1:35-39

*Jesus Preaches in Galilee*

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.<sup>67</sup>

Description of the Session's practice: (15 minutes)

Before the start of prayer, I briefly introduced centering prayer to the participants. Here is a summary of what was conveyed:

The purpose of centering prayer is to be still and know God's presence. Here are the steps to preparing to start centering prayer. First, you must decide on the length of time in increments of ten minutes, ranging from ten to thirty minutes based on your preference in praying. It is recommended to pray for at least twenty minutes when using centering prayer with the goal of thirty minutes regularly. The importance is not necessarily with the time, so feel free to start

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<sup>67</sup> Mark 1:35-39 (English Standard Version).

anywhere you'd like if it comes to you as a distraction. Second, find a meaningful word that reminds you of the Trinity. This word will be your 'sacred word' for the next few minutes as you begin your meditation. As you prepare for prayer, make sure you're in a comfortable position to avoid any possible physical distraction. Third, you will ask the presence of Christ to become real and take a few moments of silence to focus on your intention.

Centering prayer is a complete transition from noise to silence. The world these days is flooded with silent noise on social media through text, visual noise through television, and audible noise from the crowds of people everywhere. My challenge for the young adults was to find a way to clear out the distractions and noise of this world that may hinder prayer and to focus on the 'sacred word' when distractions occur. Through this prayer, one can find inner peace as we provide opportunities to clear our minds, relax, and pray.

Practice of Centering prayer: (30 minutes)

I used the centering prayer practice from Blythe with adjustments to the method by using Thomas Keating's version of centering prayer:

#### Centering Prayer Exercise Direction<sup>68</sup>

1. As you prepare for prayer, make sure you're in a comfortable position to avoid any possible physical distraction. You can sit on the floor, chair, or couch.
2. Ask the presence of Christ to become real and take a few moments of silence to focus on your intention.
3. For concentration, choose your 'sacred word' for this period of prayer. You can say it to yourself silently. Clear all other thoughts, inner voices, and sounds. This will not come to you easily and it's okay if you do get distracted, just slowly come back to the 'sacred word'. This word will help you focus on the prayer, but let go of the 'sacred word' once you're focused again and do not dwell on it.

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<sup>68</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 33. Revised to fit the experiment using Thomas Keating's version of centering prayer of using the 'sacred word' only to focus on when the participants have lost their concentration.

4. Once your designated time is over, thank God for being present and for the sacred time you were able to be in His presence. Here is when you can silently lift up other words that made you think of God outside of the 'sacred word' you chose.

Discussion of the practice: (20 minutes)

After centering prayer, I gave questionnaires to the young adults to give them time to reflect and journal their thoughts on paper:

1. What was centering prayer like for you?
2. What was the easiest part about the prayer? the hardest part about the prayer?
3. What were the thoughts going on inside of your mind?
4. What emotions did it cause you to feel? Were they good? uncomfortable? bad?
5. Did you feel a connection to God any time throughout the prayer?
6. How was the transition from thinking to silence?
7. When you were focusing on your 'sacred word', what did you notice in clearing your thoughts, mind, and motion?
8. Would you recommend this prayer to others? Why or why not?
9. Is this prayer something you would practice again?



10. What are things that you'd like to add or take away from this prayer to better help you?<sup>69</sup>

There were a lot of responses to these questions at the end of the session, and here are several of the answers that stood out as interesting. From the feedback received, students mentioned that it's been a while since they experienced solitude without the distractions of their smartphones. The overstimulation in today's society where individuals look at their phones before they sleep, when they wake up, and throughout the day is a very familiar lifestyle we can relate to. Surprisingly, many individuals enjoy the silence of centering prayer and not having their thoughts interrupted. Many found the 'thinking to silence' portion before entering prayer to be difficult to concentrate on. For those who had trouble concentrating, finding the sacred word to focus on helped them clear their minds of external thoughts. Several students found that reflecting on their inner self-guided the experience to feel God's presence more intimately. They particularly felt that contemplative prayer prepared them for a more gradual emotional and spiritual build up in personal prayer instead of the sudden loudness that occurs with Tongsung prayer. The overall feedback from all students as we finished centering prayer was that they felt at peace once the prayer was over.

Conclusion: (5 minutes) I ended this time in prayer.

### *Week 3: Deep listening prayer*

Welcome: (5 minutes) I began week 3 with a prayer for God to be with us as we listen to one another and learn to prayer for each other.

Sing a hymn called "How Deep the Father's Love for Us"<sup>70</sup>: (15 minutes)

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<sup>69</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 33. Questions were paraphrased and translated into Korean by the author to cater to the Korean young adults whose first language is Korean.

*How deep the Father's love for us,  
How vast beyond all measure,  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure.  
How great the pain of searing loss -  
The Father turns His face away,  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory.*

*Behold the man upon a cross,  
My sin upon His shoulders;  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
Call out among the scoffers.  
It was my sin that held Him there  
Until it was accomplished;  
His dying breath has brought me life -  
I know that it is finished.*

*I will not boast in anything,  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
His death and resurrection.  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer;  
But this I know with all my heart -  
His wounds have paid my ransom.*

Description of the Session's practice: (10 minutes)

Before the start of prayer, I briefly introduced Deep Listening Prayer to the participants.

Here is a summary of what was conveyed:

The goal of deep listening prayer is to listen prayerfully and intently to another person's story. This prayer involves two people; the other person can be a friend, a family, or church member. When selecting someone to pray with in this prayer, it depends on your being able to share your story with someone else. If you are not comfortable sharing your personal memory with a stranger, find someone who is close to you. By practicing this prayer, young adults can

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<sup>70</sup> Stuart Townend, "How Deep the Father's Love for Us" (Thankyou Music, 1995), Accessed March 1, 2018, <https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/how-deep-the-fathers-love-for-us/>.

learn to use the sense of hearing to practice patience in not giving their own opinions, thoughts, or interrupting someone else as they speak. These individuals are able to pray for the person they are listening to and focus on completely absorbing the words that are being said.

The method for this prayer is to take turns sharing a memory based on topics such as God's abiding love, His faithfulness, answered prayers, and times of trials. These topics can cover a wide range, but they must be centered on the Trinity. There will be moments of silence as the individual recollects and chooses from events that come to mind. Begin this time by praying to God to help both individuals to listen carefully, share intentionally, and deepen the memory. After the prayer, take some time to recollect the details of the chosen topic.

This type of deep listening is not a very common type of prayer as the traditional type of prayer is to speak through your voice or the inner voice in your head. It is learning to express compassion and empathy by focusing solely on the other individual that broadens the experience of praying for them and deepening meditation.

Practice of Deep Listening Prayer: (30 minutes)

Deep Listening Prayer Exercise Direction

1. Choose a topic relating to God to discuss. Preferably one that is personal.
2. During the sharing portion of one person, the other person will not say anything but will focus entirely on listening. That may be difficult, but no verbal reaction, head nodding, or interrupting. This does not mean to ignore the person as they speak so you can focus on what you're not supposed to be doing.
3. The listener must be fixated on what is being shared and pray for the other individual that God will reveal deeper thoughts in their memory.
4. After the listening and sharing is done, go over what was learned with one another.
5. Pray in silence together.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 35.

Discussion of the practice: (15 minutes)

Questions to go over after the prayer:

1. What was it like to be listened to? What was it like to only listen to the speaker?
2. How was it for you to listen and pray at the same time? Was it difficult to focus on either or?
3. How does deep listening enhance the experience for the one being listened to?
4. What are some ways you might incorporate deep listening into your daily life?
5. Is this type of prayer something you would practice again?

At the end of this exercise the feedback I received in our discussion was that at first being listened to without a verbal or physical reaction was awkward and uncomfortable. But as the monologue proceeded, students said it helped many of them to feel important and cared for that no one was interrupting. They noticed that the difference they see in this prayer and Tongsung prayer was that their thoughts were being carried out and listened to without being covered in the loudness of Tongsung prayer. One individual stated, "I actually like that I'm turning what is heard into an internal prayer because Tongsung prayer doesn't allow me to intently listen to the prayers of others due to the overlap of prayers being done at the same time." When the listeners gave their full attention, the speaker could tell they were showing compassion and through that felt more comfortable giving details to their story. Most students agreed that in most conversations with other individuals, it involves at least one or more looks at their phone whether it's to check the time, a text message, or a notification. For those who listened, they too felt that the lack of reciprocation to the speaker was awkward, but as they learned to solely listen and concentrate on that speaker, their prayers became deeper. They stated that their prayers became intimate and more personal with God as they prayed for someone else as if it were their own

story. Two individuals stated that it was hard for them to focus because they were visual people and listening was not their strongest ability. This experiment definitely showed that there are different styles of prayer that could allow for individuals to grow deeper in their spirituality depending on their preferred methods.

Conclusion: (5 minutes) I ended this time with a prayer.

#### *Week 4: Jesus prayer*

Welcome: (5 minutes) I began week 4 with a prayer for this time followed by the Lord's Prayer read from Matthew 6:9-13.<sup>72</sup>

Description of the Session's practice: (15 minutes)

Before the start of prayer, I briefly introduced centering prayer to the participants. Here is a summary of what was conveyed:

This is one of the most famous prayers in the history of Christianity. You will find a version of it in the Gospel of Luke in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector.<sup>73</sup> Jesus praised the tax collector for humbling himself in prayer, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Christians later expanded the prayer to "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." In the Gospel of Mark, blind Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus, "Son of David, have mercy on me".<sup>74</sup> Orthodox Christians in the Middle Ages popularized this prayer, believing that the name of Jesus was a source of power and grace leading to a state of inner silence known as *hesychia*. In short, this prayer – though sometimes spoken – led them to a place of deep contemplation or centering prayer.

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<sup>72</sup> Matthew 6:9-13 (English Standard Version).

<sup>73</sup> Luke 18:33 (English Standard Version).

<sup>74</sup> Mark 10:47 (English Standard Version).

Today many people find the Jesus Prayer to be the ultimate “Prayer of the heart.” Some repeat it silently as they take long walks. Others use it to lead them into contemplation. Some popular versions include “Jesus, have mercy on me”; “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” ; and the simple “Christ, have mercy.” As the Reverend Daniel Wolpert points out in *Creating a Life with God*, “The exact wording, so long as it contains the name of Jesus, is irrelevant.”<sup>75</sup> To experience the power in repeatedly praying the name of Jesus is the motive for this Jesus prayer.

Practice of the Jesus Prayer: (40 minutes)

The Jesus Prayer exercise direction

1. Sing a Hymn: *Jesus Paid it All* <sup>76</sup>– Elvina Hall, Maryland, USA (1865)

*I hear the Savior say, “Thy strength indeed is small;  
Child of weakness, watch and pray,  
Find in Me thine all in all.”  
Refrain:*

*Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.*

*For nothing good have I  
Whereby Thy grace to claim;  
I’ll wash my garments white  
In the blood of Calvary’s Lamb.*

*Sing the Refrain:*

*And now complete in Him,  
My robe, His righteousness,*

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<sup>75</sup> Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray*, 39.

<sup>76</sup> Elvina Hall, composed by John T. Grape, Lyrics to “Jesus Paid it All.” (Hymnary.org, 2007), Accessed March 9, 2018. [https://hymnary.org/text/i\\_hear\\_the\\_savior\\_say\\_thy\\_strength\\_indee](https://hymnary.org/text/i_hear_the_savior_say_thy_strength_indee)

*Close sheltered 'neath His side,  
I am divinely blest.*

*Sing the Refrain:*

*Lord, now indeed I find  
Thy pow'r, and Thine alone,  
And melt the heart of stone.*

*Sing the Refrain:*

*When from my dying bed  
My ransomed soul shall rise,  
"Jesus died my soul to save,"  
Shall rend the vaulted skies.*

*Sing the Refrain:*

*And when before the throne  
I stand in Him complete,  
I'll lay my trophies down,  
All down at Jesus' feet.*

2. Read the Bible together: John 15:1-17

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my

name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.<sup>77</sup>

3. Choose from a variation of the Jesus Prayer that suits you best:

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.”

“Jesus, have mercy.”

“Christ, have mercy.”

4. Find a comfortable area to pray whether it's by sitting or standing. Preferably a quiet area without distractions of the world.

5. Repeat the chosen Jesus Prayer in silence for however long you choose. Relax and try to filter out any extra thoughts or sounds around you.

6. At the conclusion of your prayer, write down what you experienced. Through journaling, you are able to organize your thoughts and leave it in written memory.

Discussion of the practice: (15 minutes)

- a. How did you notice the presence of God or Christ in this prayer?
- b. What is the value of repeating this prayer over and over silently?
- c. Did you notice any inner movements within your spirit as you prayed this prayer?

Most of the students enjoyed this prayer as it gave them a simple thought to reflect on, yet it drew out very tearful emotions. During our discussion at the end of the session, when asked how they noticed the presence of God or Christ in their prayer, they mentioned it was through clearly understanding the hymn and Bible verse that was recited. When praying the Jesus prayer, some students said they felt as if God was trying to show them the grace and mercy of Jesus who

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<sup>77</sup> John 15:1-17 (English Standard Version)



paid for their sins on the cross. The students never felt that they understood the hymn completely until this session of repeating continuously “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” and never fully understood John 15:1-17 as emotionally. Six students mentioned that this type of prayer was helpful to aid their understanding of God and that they prefer the Jesus prayer to be done after a hymn or Scripture to better comprehend the Truth. Several students mentioned that the Jesus prayer was similar to the Tongsung prayer in that the silent repetition of the Jesus Prayer is like the “Lord, Lord, Lord” that is said at the start of Tongsung prayer.

Conclusion: (3 minutes) I ended with a prayer.

#### *Week 5: Compassion practice*

Welcome: (5 minutes) I began week 5 with a time of prayer and introduction.

1. Create a safe, comfortable, and sacred environment that can range from the home, church, outdoors, or open space. The setting I used took place in the young adult room at Bell Memorial United Methodist Church since it created a sacred and safe space that they were familiar with. The young adult room is decorated with favorite Bible verses written by the students, photos from various fellowship events, and cushions/mats. The furniture in the room is a traditional Korean style format with a sitting table, large heated mat, and cushions to cater to Korean young adults who are studying abroad. This setting brings a familiar taste of home for these students who are living in another country.
2. Welcoming hug to greet one another. If hugging is not comfortable for some Korean young adults, whose culture is not accustomed to hugging, then shaking hands is acceptable.

Description of the Session’s practice: (10 minutes)

3. Establish ground rules: maintaining the confidentiality of one another, no cross-talk, no advice-giving, no critiquing another’s experience or articulation of it; sharing being optional. Asking the participants what would bring them to feel comfortable and concerns they have regarding the sharing will create a better environment.
4. Describe the practice including the general overview of the Compassion Practice. I will facilitate by explaining its purpose, rationale, flow and intention.

5. Trust their own needs—invite the participants to trust their own sense of their needs and only engage the practice in ways that feel right to them. If it is out of their comfort zone, it is acceptable to just listen to the others who are practicing.

Practice of the Compassion practice: (30 minutes)

#### Re-positioning

Invite the participant to move to an area in the room in which they'd like to engage in the practice. Once in place, invite them to stretch to relieve any tension they may have. Through light arm exercises, reaching for your toes, and moving your neck, you can prepare physically to relax and engage in the practice.

#### Breathing

Invite the participants to connect with their breath by being aware of how it enters and flows through their body. Since it is a passive motion, once your mind becomes aware of it, you are able to control it with an active motion. As the facilitator, I will instruct the young adults to extend the length of their exhale and deepen their inhale, then to allow a rhythm of breathing to take hold that nurtures and brings internal settling.

#### Lead the practice

- Be conscious as the facilitator to speak in a voice that is calming and soothing, yet loud enough for all the participants in the room to hear.
- Allow for ample space and silence between phrases that are spoken to give time for the participants to hear, understand, and meditate on what is being said.
- Do not dive into the depths of the practice myself; but wade into the waters enough to sense pacing.
- Be attentive to shuffling, giggling, snoring, whispering, and other stirrings within the participants.
- Be aware of any internal movements within myself that may cause a distraction; instead invite them to relax in solitude.

Toward the end of the practice, invite the participants to reflect on what they have received through the practice. The young adults will be encouraged to write down their reflections in their journals.

Invite the participants to reflect on one concrete way they might own, honor, embody, or integrate the gift of this practice in the material world. How will they use this practice at work, school, or at home?

Emergence from the practice—gather the participants back to the center of the room where they can see one another and come to share what was learned. Transition the participants gently into an awareness of being back in this particular day, this particular room, this particular circle.

Invite them to close their eyes and become aware of being in their bodies through moving their muscles and noticing their breath. When they are ready to open their eyes, they will slowly come back to the material world.

Allow a few moments for the participants to ponder the journal they wrote and list several points to take with them from the practice. Then invite them to a more full awareness of being in the present material world.

Discussion of the practice: (20 minutes) This time was an open sharing time where individuals listened and shared what they learned.

Invite persons to share what they liked about their experience within the prayer. During such sharing, the group should practice contemplative listening while another is sharing—simply holding and receiving the reality of another’s experience whatever that may be.

After that sharing has been concluded, invite a meta conversation about the practice itself—insights, obstacles, or questions involved with the practice.

During the debriefing, be aware of my own centered presence. If I become compelled to give my input or opinion, silently notice it, invite it to relax, then return my centered awareness to the person sharing. (After the session, be sure to reflect on my trigger and when it is strong, take it to supervision or spiritual direction.)

If tears arise during a participant’s sharing, simply allow them to be. Hold the space by remaining grounded and nonplussed—heavy emotion is natural and normal. Avoid holding the person; praying for them; or drawing undue attention to them—these emerge out of our own discomfort and inadvertently communicate that something is wrong or too difficult to hold. When the debriefing is completed, conclude the session in prayer and final blessing by the leader.<sup>78</sup>

At the end of the compassion practice we had a discussion that many students found to be relaxing; we reflected on their personal thoughts and discussed how to organize them into a prayer. One student said that he’s lived so absorbed in the fast pace of adjusting to his circumstances after immigrating to the U.S., that he felt he’s had no break. These students mentioned that the ‘breathing’ techniques they’ve heard about were something they felt was just a method for those who do yoga, not a tool for prayer. By being spread out and isolated, students

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<sup>78</sup> Taken from class material from Frank Rogers’ Spring 2016 course labeled ‘Facilitating Contemplative Practice’ at Claremont School of Theology with revisions to accommodate the Korean young adults.

felt that they could listen closely and develop their own thoughts without being influenced by what they see and hear. The part that students enjoyed the most was the debriefing at the end where they could be honest with one another and to be vulnerable to their awareness of who God is. During the discussion at the end, we were able to talk about what they originally thought prayer was supposed to look like and the new Compassion practice that was learned. They said this was the complete opposite from Tongsung prayer and almost questioned if this was really Christian prayer. When talking about their journal reflections, they were surprised at how deep their Compassion practice turned out to be. Many of these adults talked about their worries, current lifestyle, and background that they kept to themselves. During the discussion time, they were able to share and relate to one another, developing a deeper emotional awareness of their spiritual state.

Conclusion: (5 minutes) I ended this time in prayer.

#### *Week 6: Evaluation*

Welcome: (5 minutes) I began the Week 6 with a prayer thanking God for the 6-week program.

Description of the final session: (15 minutes) I reviewed the different prayers that were practiced during the program just in case they were forgotten.

Debriefing of the program: (30 minutes) This was a free time of sharing the different feedback from the prayers that were taught during the 6-week program.

After completion of the six weeks of the implementation project, the young adults gathered together to review the different types of prayer, share the pros and cons of each, and identify areas that need improvement. In evaluating the young adults' experiences, the overall consensus was that the new prayers were fresh and great to try. There were many reasons, but the

first is that the Korean Christian Church spends numerous hours throughout the year on forming prayer meetings. However, it is common that instead of being given time to pray individually, meditate on the prayer, and listen for God's voice, individuals are led to Tongsung prayer. The Tongsung form of prayer and the prayer itself is precious because it is an opportunity to understand the power of prayer and spiritual rejuvenation. My point is that it falls short of catering to the spirituality and fellowship of each individual. Firstly, the positive feedback received from the project was that contemplative prayer allowed them to reflect back on themselves, dig deeper into their innermost feelings to hear God's answers, and pray with the full sincerity of their spiritual souls.

Secondly, the interesting results were the content of the young adults' prayers. In the beginning of the project, conversations consisted of how to pray and throughout the project it evolved to what to pray for. The majority of young adults who participated in the 6-week contemplative prayer project stated that previously they prayed to God to ask for something and to get answers through those prayers. Up until now, the contents of their prayers were stated to have been self-focused, people focused, work focused, and request focused. But through the six weeks of contemplative prayers, they experienced communion between God and Creation, an interpersonal relationship. They were able to experience the vertical fellowship with God as they were able to focus on hearing God's answers and changing the content of their prayers to be God focused.

Thirdly, after experiencing these prayers, these individuals had the chance to look back on themselves and repent of areas in their lives they neglected or suppressed. Contemplative prayer paved the way for these students to realize their current spiritual state, heal the emotional hurts they have, and painful memories from the past. They realized that there is no one else who

can look into their innermost souls better than they themselves, which allowed them to calmly work through those areas in faith through prayer. Lastly, during the six-week period, the homework assignment given was to practice these prayers on their own time — whether it's at home, the workplace, or on a walk—when they are able to put into practice what they have learned. Prayer becomes a part of life and their life becomes a prayer.

Conclusion: (5 minutes) I ended this time with a prayer.

## Chapter 5 — Conclusion

In the Korean Christian Church, prayer is a significant part of the Christian spiritual life, specifically Tongsung prayer. The power of prayer in Korean Christian churches cannot be negated and many positive examples prove they have great value as the basic foundation of a believer, which is communication with God. Through revivals, Early Morning prayer, Wednesday night Bible Study, and special New Year prayer meetings, Korean Christians create various events throughout the year whose sole purpose is prayer. Early Morning prayers and evening revivals are jokingly labeled as ‘open throughout the year’ to signify how often and long the Korean Church uses the term ‘prayer gatherings’ to come together. Definitely through these prayer gatherings, the Holy Spirit is alive and active revealing God’s glory to the people. However, in these prayer meetings, people tend to use the time of prayer to lift up to God their strong desires to have their prayer requests answered, desires fulfilled, and their own will be done. The purpose of this project was to introduce different contemplative practices that along with Tongsung prayer in the Korean Christian churches will create a deeper fellowship between God and the believer. In Scripture it says,

...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.<sup>79</sup>

The Korean Christian Church that tends to focus on prayer could use prayer the wrong way with intentions that differ from what God seeks from Christians. Through this implementation project, I have reflected on prayer in a new light, seeing that prayer is more than

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<sup>79</sup> 1 John 1:3, 6-7 (English Standard Version).

a mere listing of requests before God and that we do not pray just to have God fulfill our will, but we pray to understand what prayer means for the individual. Prayer must not be a tool to have your own agenda met, but a relationship with God to align the Christian's will with God's will. Within this relationship, God will respond to your prayers by fulfilling them, or by saying no, or by not answering your prayers at the present time. Scripture addresses the Christian who prays the wrong way.

You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.<sup>80</sup>

Prayers that seek to fulfill one's selfish desires or wants that do not align with Scripture, will not be answered no matter how hard or long you pray. Therefore, it is vital that one evaluates oneself before coming to God in prayer. Your heart must be pure before the Lord. This does not mean one must be sinless before God; that would be impossible, but the one who prays needs to want what God desires.

In his book "*Sagyumeui Kido* (Prayer as Fellowship with God)," Pastor Young Bong Kim states that in our relationship with God, fellowship is important. Pastor Kim emphasizes humbling yourself before God and revealing your innermost thoughts to God without hiding anything. This is the foundation of prayer and anything apart from that is a hypocritical prayer. He explains that the purpose of all prayer is to seek fellowship and union with God. When Christians pray, it is not just a temporary moment of meeting God and once the prayer ends, that fellowship is over. Through continual prayers, Christians are able to enjoy the full extent of what it means to fellowship with God. This term 'fellowship' exists between more than one individual

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<sup>80</sup> James 4:2-3 (English Standard Version).



and is an interrelationship between Christians and God. Through the interrelationship with God, the love for God and affection for God is built. This relationship is dynamic and therefore it can be developed and improved constantly. As it is true with human relationships, we see many actions that follow which include conversing with one another, singing together, walking without saying a word, arguing at times, whispering to each other, and thinking of each other when apart.<sup>81</sup>

Prayer is about forming a personal relationship with God. This study was used to deepen this definition by finding ways to pursue growth in this fellowship and to find methods to introduce this deepened relationship to the Korean Christian Church. What was learned by undertaking this project is that through conversing with God and opening your heart, your soul intertwines with the Holy Spirit in a true fellowship. Through words, meditation, praise, and tears, Christians interact with God. When prayers become deep, consistent, and continued over time, the one who prays comes to know God more and comes to love Him wholeheartedly. The one who prays in this way is able to understand God's will for them. Just as Christ stated that the Father is in Him and He in the Father, Christians are able to gain a biblical perspective that aligns with God as was studied in the Old and New Testaments. David's prayer in Psalm 131 shows him explaining to God his feelings regarding his current circumstance.

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;  
my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things  
too great and too marvelous for me.  
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.  
O Israel, hope in the Lord  
from this time forth and forevermore.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Kim, *Sagyumeui Kido*, 24.

<sup>82</sup> Psalm 131:1-3 (English Standard Version).

When David looks at God's faithfulness in the past, instead of expecting big things for the future, he rests in the peace and comfort of being in the presence of God. David's honest and deep faith is seen by examining his prayers that express true joy of knowing that God will be with him eternally. From Scripture, David in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament are figures who had a deep, meaningful fellowship with God. These Christians in the Bible laid down their selfish desires and pride to seek continual fellowship with God throughout their time. This is the reason why their lives were filled with the Holy Spirit working and molding them to be holy. Examples from Scripture of prayers of supplication, thanksgiving, and lamentation were used to help facilitate a biblical approach to different contemplative prayer styles.

Our prayers must constantly become deeper. The more heartfelt and rich prayer becomes, the stronger will become the relationship with God. In whatever circumstance, if Christians lift it up to God in prayer and earnestly ask for His will to be shown, He will answer according to His perfect will. Observation of meditative prayer as reported earlier and through the implementation project with the young adults practicing this prayer resulted in the same conclusion. Feelings of strong fellowship with God that could not be found in prayers of supplication and thanksgiving, were felt through contemplative prayer. The Korean Christian Church needs to incorporate prayer practices like meditation and contemplative prayer in ways that fit the culture and language.

The power that Tongsung prayer has in its earnest cry out to God through loud voices and the deep relationship that is built with silent contemplation can together create a rich, varied, meaningful, and abundant prayer life for Christians. Especially for the young adults in Korean Christian churches who are just starting out in their faith, instead of presenting a prayer style that

plants a negative seed, I found it more helpful to explain the power and ability of prayer. It was explained to the participants in this project that a mere shouting and crying in front of God is not what identifies prayer; but it is in asking Him to come into communion with us and seeking a personal relationship that we engage in prayer. Introducing contemplative prayer to the young adults of today's Korean Christian Church will surely allow them to experience God with more depth in their spirituality, prayer life, and faith. Grafting and implementing together the traditions of the Korean Christian Church and the spiritual model of contemplative prayer, found within the Western Christian Church is a task that, I am convinced, must be the primary focus in today's Korean Christian ministries.

Studying the different contemplative prayer styles and implementing them at Bell Memorial Korean United Methodist Church drew out the importance of learning that it's not a matter of how to pray but how one understands prayer. Through this project, this question was important for the young adults who were just starting to pray. Before coming to God, it is necessary to reflect on one's current state, to seek communion with God, and to fellowship with Him. This is the correct starting point that Christ gave when He asked us to follow Him in prayer.

Introducing contemplative prayer to the young adults at Bell Memorial United Methodist Church had its challenges as there were doubts as to whether this was a Christian practice and how this would relate to Tongsung prayer in a Korean church. These were thought-provoking questions to consider and were helpful to the process of explaining contemplation. If students were uncomfortable with the idea of contemplative prayer, they were given the choice to not participate, but everyone was curious to see how these challenges would be answered, so they continued in the six-week prayer sessions. To assure this was a Christian practice, I read verses

from Scripture and let that introduce the time of prayer. The question of how contemplative prayer would be used with Tongsung prayer in a Korean church helped me draw a conclusion to this project. Contemplative prayer has its limitations in that internal meditation does not get as much verbal expression as Tongsung prayer is given. Whereas the limitation of Tongsung prayer is its lack of enough time or space to meditate on what God is trying to say. We were able to discuss how adding the methods of contemplative prayer before and after Tongsung prayer is a beneficial way to expand the limitations of both types of prayer.

The problem this project chose to address is that most people tend to pray to God when they have a specific request; they make the request with the motive of it being fulfilled, as a child presents its wishes to Santa Claus before Christmas. However, prayer is not a tool meant to be taken out only when something needs to be fixed or in order to obtain a desired outcome. The most beneficial start point of prayer is having a relationship with the God of the Universe. Deep meditation leads an individual to self-discovery.

Knowing self is the discovery of the dynamic colors within one's self and observing the full potential the discovery can bring about. By digging deep into one's innermost thoughts, the individual is able to heal scars from past hurts, phobias, fears, pain, sadness, and a variety of wounds. Through prayer, an individual is able to mold life into a meaningful experience that benefits their Christian faith. Our God who is omnipresent and sovereign over all circumstances uses these various situations for His glory. He was and is faithful in our past, present, and future.

Korean Christian churches can adapt contemplative prayer practices to fit with their traditional prayer practices. Adaptation will reap rich benefits for members of all Korean

Christian churches of strengthening and growing in their faith in God, just as it did with the young adults at Bell Memorial Korean United Methodist Church. Frank Roger's book states:

God breathes the sacred breath of life into the mud-formed being of the first human. And God's continuous breathing sustains our lives each moment. If God's breath were held, humanity would perish.... Catching our breath, then, deepens our connection with the sacred source of life, the vital spiritual energy that sustains and restores all living things. This life-bestowing energy permeates our existence and envelops our world. It is the sustaining presence in which we live and move and have our being.<sup>83</sup>

People can't survive without breath. And God so loved his creation that He breathed the breath of life into each person, and when we breathe, it becomes a spiritual awakening whereby we can become one with the presence of God through prayer. Thus, the compassion practice also begins with the breath, allowing us to become grounded and feel the presence of our God as He speaks to and guides our lives. Contemplative prayers provide the technique and structure for every person to have this experience with God.

Through the study, practice and analysis of contemplative prayer practices in Western culture and the key points of prayer in Scripture, it is possible to incorporate contemplative prayer practices in the Korean Christian Church to be used along with Tongsung prayer. The dynamic colors of prayer and the spiritual relationship it provides are the reasons why it is vital for young adults to learn the joy of prayer that results in a deep union with God.

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<sup>83</sup>Rogers Jr., *Practicing Compassion*, 45.

## Appendix

### Pre-Program Questionnaires

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure yet
2. Do you usually attend Friday night prayer and fellowship?
  - a. Always
  - b. Mostly
  - c. Rarely
  - d. First time
3. Are you satisfied with your current prayer life?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I do not pray
4. When do you pray?
  - a. Before eating my meals
  - b. During my devotionals
  - c. Usually in the mornings
  - d. Right before I go to sleep
  - e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your preferred style of prayer?
  - a. Tongsung prayer -- Praying out loud

- b. Contemplative prayer -- Meditative prayer
  - c. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Do you feel comfortable using Tongsung Prayer at church?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I don't know
- 7. If not, what about it makes you feel uncomfortable?  

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- 8. Do you know what contemplative prayer is?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I've heard about it
- 9. Do you want to learn and practice the contemplative prayer?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. None of your business
- 10. If yes, do you think that using contemplative prayer along with Tongsung prayer will bring about a positive change to your prayer life?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 11. Will having a variety of methods of prayer bring about a positive change to your faith?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

Thank you very much for your participation.



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